

THE BEST OF
ISAAC
ASIMOV'S
SCIENCE
FICTION
MAGAZINE

ASIMOV • WATT-EVANS • BOVA

ORBIT

GRAPHIC SCIENCE FICTION

NO. 2 \$4.95



T A B L E O F C O N T E N T S

Lawrence Watt-Evans

Windwagon Smith And The Martians....Page 3

Adaptation ♦ Fred Burke

Art ♦ Darick Robertson and Mark Pacella

Ben Bova

Silent NightPage 18

Adaptation ♦ Fred Burke

Art ♦ Rafael Kayanan

Isaac Asimov

Marooned Off Vesta.....Page 33

Adaptation ♦ J.D. Scott

Art ♦ Michael Davis

Editor

Letitia Glozer

Consulting Editors, Davis Publications, Inc.

Charles Ardal, Cynthia Manson

Cover Art

John Pound

Cover Design and Logotype

Steve Vance

Book Design

Stan Woch

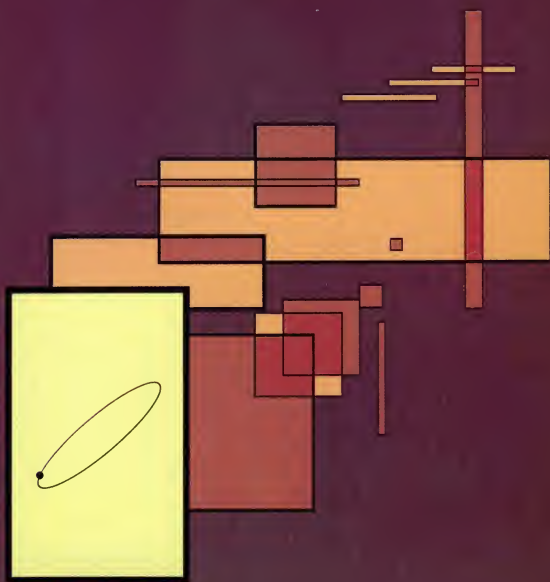
Published by Eclipse Books, P. O. Box 1099, Forestville, CA 95436

Dean Mullaney, Publisher; Catherine Yronwode, Editor-in-Chief; Jan Mullaney Chairman; Bruce Palley, Vice President; Beau Smith, Sales Manager; Sean Derring, Circulation.

Licensed under an arrangement with Davis Publications, Inc. All stories are adapted from short stories that originally appeared in *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine*. "Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine" is a registered trademark of Davis Publications, Inc. Used with permission. Entire contents © 1990 Eclipse Enterprises, Inc. Cover art © 1990 John Pound. "Windwagon Smith And The Martians" by Lawrence Watt-Evans © 1989 Davis Publications, Inc.; adaptation © 1990 Fred Burke; art © 1990 Darick Robertson and Mark Pacella. "Silent Night" by Ben Bova © 1987 Davis Publications, Inc.; adaptation © 1990 Fred Burke; art © 1990 Rafael Kayanan. "Marooned Off Vesta" by Isaac Asimov © 1938 Ziff-Davis Publishing Co., renewed 1966 by Isaac Asimov; adaptation © 1990 J.D. Scott; art © Michael Davis.

ORBIT





I RECKON MOST FOLKS HAVE HEARD OF THOMAS SMITH, THE LITTLE SAILOR FROM MASSACHUSETTS WHO TURNED UP IN WESTPORT, MISSOURI ONE DAY IN 1853 ABOARD THE CONTRAPTION HE CALLED A WINDWAGON.

HE'D RIGGED HIMSELF A DECK AND A SAIL AND A TILLER ON TOP OF A WAGON, AND JUST ABOUT TRIED TO MAKE A PRAIRIE SCHOONER INTO A REAL SCHOONER. FIGURED ON BUILDING HIMSELF A WHOLE FLEET AND GETTING RICH, SHIPPING FOLKS AND FREIGHT TO SANTA FE OR WHEREVER THEY MIGHT HAVE A MIND TO GO.

WELL, AS YOU MIGHT HAVE HEARD, HE GOT SOME OF THE FOLKS IN WESTPORT TO BUY STOCK IN HIS FIRM, AND HE BUILT HIMSELF A BIGGER, BETTER WINDWAGON FROM THE GROUND UP.

AFTER HE'D TAKEN HIS INVESTORS OUT FOR A TEST RUN, SMITH ALLOWED AS HOW THE STEERING MIGHT NOT BE COMPLETELY SMOOTH YET, THOUGH THE IDEA WAS SOUND, BUT THE FOLKS IN WESTPORT JUST WERENT INTERESTED.

Windwagon Smith and the Martians

by Lawrence Watt-Evans

LAST ANYONE HEARD, OLD WINDWAGON SMITH WAS SAILING WEST ACROSS THE PRAIRIE LOOKING FOR BRAVER SOULS.

A GOOD MANY FOLKS HAVE WONDERED WHAT'EVER BECAME OF WINDWAGON SMITH, MYSELF AMONGST THEM, AND I'M PLEASED TO BE ABLE TO TELL THE STORY.

AND IF YOU ASK HOW I COME TO KNOW IT, WELL, I HEARD IT FROM SMITH HIMSELF, BUT THAT'S ANOTHER STORY ENTIRELY. HERE'S THE WAY OF IT...

AFTER A TIME HE HAD GOT MOST OF THE WAY TO SANTA FE, BUT HAD LOST THE TRAIL AGAIN-- THE STEERING WAS STILL A MITE DIFFICULT--WHEN HE NOTICED THAT THE SAND WAS GETTING TO BE ANFULLY RED.

Adapted by Fred Burke
Pencilled by Darick Robertson Inked by Mark Pacella
Painted by Sam Parsons and Reuben Rude
Lettered by Wayne Truman Edited by Letitia Glozer

THE SKY WAS GETTING DARKER, TOO, AND WHAT'S MORE, SMITH SUDDENLY FELT SORT OF LIGHT, AS IF THE WIND MIGHT JUST BLOW HIM OFF HIS OWN DECK, EVEN THOUGH IT DIDN'T SEEM TO BE BLOWING ANY HARDER THAN BEFORE.

AND HE WAS HAVING A LITTLE TROUBLE BREATHING, LIKE AS IF HE'D GOT HIMSELF UP ON TOP OF A MOUNTAIN.

NELL OLD WINDNAGON SMITH HAD READ UP ON THE WEST BEFORE HE EVER LEFT MASSACHUSETTS, AND HE'D NEVER HEARD OF ANYTHING LIKE THIS.

HE COMMENCED TO BE SERIOUSLY WORRIED AND FURLED THE SAILS RIGHT UP, SO THAT THAT WINDNAGON OF HIS ROLLED TO A STOP IN THE MIDDLE OF THAT RED DESERT.

SEEMED LIKE HE HAD TO BE EXTRA CAREFUL ABOUT EVERYTHING HE DID, BECAUSE EVEN THE WAY HIS OWN BODY MOVED DIDN'T SEEM QUITE RIGHT...

HE MIGHT HAVE THOUGHT HE WAS DREAMING IF HE HADN'T BEEN THE LEVEL-HEADED SORT HE WAS, AND PROUD OF HIS PLAIN SENSE TO KNOW WHETHER HE WAS AWAKE OR ASLEEP.

...OF COURSE, BEING A SAILOR, HE COULD KEEP HIS FEET JUST ABOUT ANYWHERE, SO HE GOT BY.

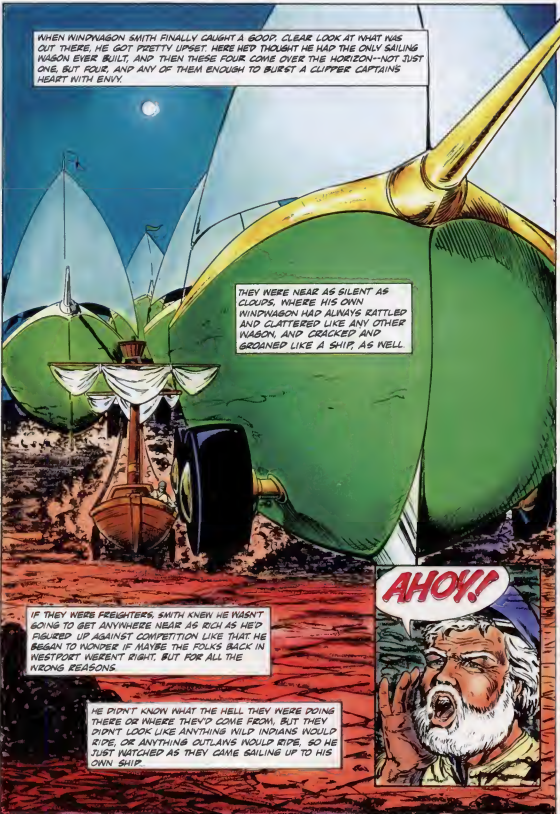
BUT WHEN HE LOOKED TO WHAT HE RECKONED WAS WEST, HE SAW SOMETHING MOVE, SOMETHING THAT WAS BLUE AGAINST THE BLUE OF THE SKY, SO THAT HE COULDN'T MAKE OUT JUST WHAT IT WAS.

BUT NO MATTER WHERE SMITH LOOKED, ALL HE COULD SEE WAS THAT RED, RED SAND. THE HORIZON LOOKED A SHAPE CLOSE IN; WASN'T ANYTHING QUITE WHAT IT OUGHT TO BE.

HE DIDN'T LIKE IT A BIT.

IT WAS COMING HIS WAY, THOUGH, SO HE FIGURED HE'D JUST LET IT COME, AND TAKE A CLOSER LOOK WHEN HE COULD.

BUT HE WASN'T ABOUT TO LET IT COME ON HIM UNPREPARED.



WHEN WINDWAGON SMITH FINALLY CAUGHT A GOOD, CLEAR LOOK AT WHAT WAS OUT THERE, HE GOT PRETTY UPSET. HERE HE'D THOUGHT HE HAD THE ONLY SAILING WAGON EVER BUILT, AND THEN THESE FOUR CAME OVER THE HORIZON--NOT JUST ONE, BUT FOUR, AND ANY OF THEM ENOUGH TO BURST A CLIPPER CAPTAIN'S HEART WITH ENVY.

THEY WERE NEAR AS SILENT AS CLOUDS, WHERE HIS OWN WINDWAGON HAD ALWAYS RATTLED AND CLATTERED LIKE ANY OTHER WAGON, AND CRACKED AND GROANED LIKE A SHIP, AS WELL.

IF THEY WERE FREIGHTERS, SMITH KNEW HE WASN'T GOING TO GET ANYWHERE NEAR AS RICH AS HE'D FIGURED UP AGAINST COMPETITION LIKE THAT. HE BEGAN TO WONDER IF MAYBE THE FOLKS BACK IN WESTPORT WEREN'T RIGHT, BUT FOR ALL THE WRONG REASONS.

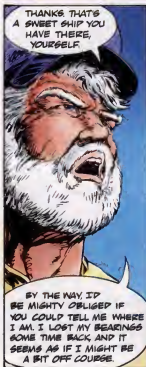
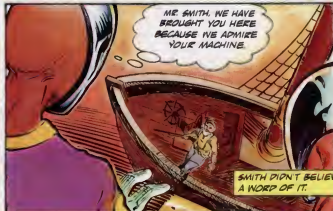
HE DIDN'T KNOW WHAT THE HELL THEY WERE DOING THERE OR WHERE THEY'D COME FROM, BUT THEY DIDN'T LOOK LIKE ANYTHING WILD INDIANS WOULD RIDE, OR ANYTHING OUTLAWS WOULD RIDE, SO HE JUST WATCHED AS THEY CAME SAILING UP TO HIS OWN SHIP.

AHOY!

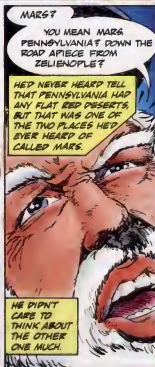




SMITH THOUGHT A MINUTE, NOTICED THAT NONE OF THEM HAD ANY GUNS THAT HE COULD SEE, AND DECIDED TO RISK IT.



THE MASKS LOOKED LIKE SOMETHING INDIANS MIGHT WEAR, BUT HE'D NEVER HEARD OF ANY INDIANS LIKE THESE.



HAVING AN INTEREST IN NAVIGATION, SMITH KNEW SOMETHING ABOUT THE PLANETS. HE KNEW THAT MARS WAS SORT OF REDDISH, AND THE RED SAND WOULD ACCOUNT FOR THAT NICELY. HE LOOKED UP AT THAT STRANGE SKY AND DECIDED THAT ONE OF THREE THINGS HAD HAPPENED

EITHER HED GONE COMPLETELY MAD WITHOUT NOTICING IT, OR SOMEBODY WAS PLAYING ONE HELL OF A PRACTICAL JOKE ON HIM, OR THE STRANGER WAS TELLING THE TRUTH.

FOR THE SAKE OF ARGUMENT, HE DECIDED ON THE LAST ONE.

WHAT SORT OF A CHALLENGE?

I AM MOOHAY NILLAY, AND I AM THE CHAMPION YACHTSMAN OF ALL TEER, AS WE CALL OUR PLANET.

I HAVE THE FINEST SAND SHIP EVER BUILT, AND IN IT I HAVE RACED EVERY CHALLENGER THAT MY WORLD PROVIDED, AND I HAVE DEFEATED THEM ALL. YET IT WAS NOT ENOUGH. I GREW BORED, AND SOUGHT ELSEWHERE FOR COMPETITORS WHO COULD RACE AGAINST ME.

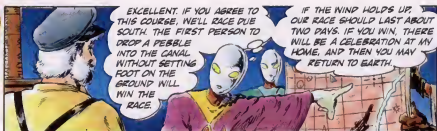
INDEED IT IS MR. SMITH. UNFORTUNATELY, OUR TWO WORLDS ARE THE ONLY ONES IN THIS SYSTEM BEARING INTELLIGENT LIFE, AND I HAVE SEARCHED ENDLESSLY FOR SOMEONE ON YOUR PLANET WHO WOULD SEE THE OBVIOUS VALUE OF SAILING THE PLAINS.

TO DATE, YOU ARE ONLY THE SECOND I HAVE DISCOVERED THE FIRST, CAPTAIN SHARD OF THE DESPERATE LAK, FITTED HIS SEA-GOING SHIP WITH WHEELS IN ORDER TO ELUDE PURSUIT. I DREAMED HIM HERE, AND EASILY DEFEATED HIS CLUMSY CONTRIVANCE.

I HOPE THAT YOU, MR. SMITH, WILL PROVIDE A GREATER TEST.

WELL, I HOPE I WILL, MR. NILLAY.

AND MAYBE IF I'M A GOOD LOSER, YOU'LL SEND ME BACK TO EARTH.



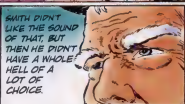
EXCELLENT. IF YOU AGREE TO THIS COURSE, WE'LL RACE DUE SOUTH. THE FIRST PERSON TO DROP A PEBBLE INTO THE CANAL WITHOUT SETTING FOOT ON THE GROUND WILL WIN THE RACE.

IF THE WIND HOLDS UP, OUR RACE SHOULD LAST ABOUT TWO DAYS. IF YOU WIN, THERE WILL BE A CELEBRATION AT MY HOME, AND THEN YOU MAY RETURN TO EARTH.



AND IF I LOSE?

MAKE IT A GOOD RACE, AND I MIGHT CONSIDER SENDING YOU BACK... EVENTUALLY.

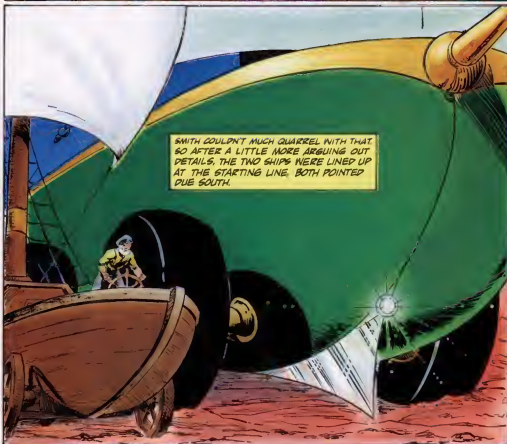


SMITH DIDN'T LIKE THE SOUND OF THAT, BUT THEN HE DIDN'T HAVE A WHOLE HELL OF A LOT OF CHOICE.

WHAT ABOUT THOSE OTHER FOLKS? I'M SAILING SINGLE-HANDED, AND YOU'VE GOT TWO CREWMEN AND THREE OTHER SHIPS.



CAPTAIN SHARD HAD A FULL CREW, BUT SINCE YOU ARE ALONE, I WILL SAIL ALONE ALSO. THE OTHER SHIPS ARE MERELY HERE TO OBSERVE... AND TO HELP OUT IF I'VE ENCOUNTER PROBLEMS.



SMITH COULDN'T MUCH QUARREL WITH THAT, SO AFTER A LITTLE MORE ARGUING OUT DETAILS, THE TWO SHIPS WERE LINED UP AT THE STARTING LINE, BOTH POINTED DUE SOUTH.

ZZZZZZZZZZ





OLD HINDWAGON YANKED
THE ANCHOR ABOARD



...AND BEGAN PILING
ON EVERY STITCH OF
CANVAS HIS TWO
LITTLE MASTS
COULD CARRY...

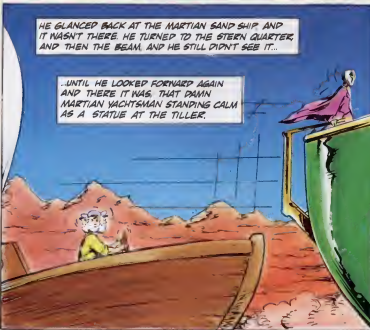


**FWP
THWUP**

...ALL THE WHILE
RUNNING BACK AND
FORTH LIKE A
LUNATIC TO KEEP
THE CRAFT ON
COURSE



BEFORE HE KNEW IT, HE
WAS ROLLING SOUTH AT
ABOUT THE BEST SPEED
HE'D EVER LAID ON, WITH
NOTHING LEFT TO DO
BUT STAND BY THE WHEEL
AND HOPE A CROSSWIND
DIDN'T TIP HIM RIGHT
OVER.



HE GLANCED BACK AT THE MARTIAN SAND SHIP AND
IT WASN'T THERE. HE TURNED TO THE STERN QUARTER,
AND THEN THE BEAM, AND HE STILL DIDN'T SEE IT...

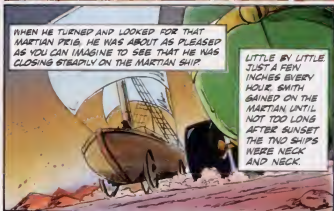
...UNTIL HE LOOKED FORWARD AGAIN
AND THERE IT WAS. THAT DAMN
MARTIAN YACHTSMAN STANDING CALM
AS A STATUE AT THE TILLER.



BUT SMITH WASN'T ABOUT TO
LET SOME BOSSY LITTLE
FOREIGNER IN A MASK AND
A NIGHTSHIRT BEAT HIM
THAT EASILY, NO SIR!



HE TIED DOWN THE MABEL AND DUCKED BELOW, SEARCHING FOR ANYTHING HE COULD SPARE TO LIGHTEN THE LOAD AND HELP HIS SPEED



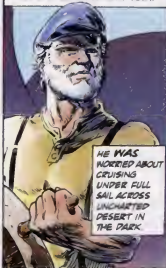
WHEN HE TURNED AND LOOKED FOR THAT MARTIAN PRIZ, HE WAS ABOUT AS PLEASED AS YOU CAN IMAGINE TO SEE THAT HE WAS CLOSING STEADILY ON THE MARTIAN SHIP.

LITTLE BY LITTLE, JUST A FEW INCHES EVERY HOUR, SMITH GAINED ON THE MARTIAN UNTIL NOT TOO LONG AFTER SUNSET THE TWO SHIPS WERE NECK AND NECK.

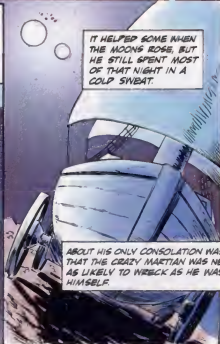


IT WAS ABOUT AT THIS POINT THAT IT FIRST SANK IN THAT THEY WERENT GOING TO HEAVE TO FOR THE NIGHT, AND SMITH BEGAN TO DO SOME PRETTY SERIOUS WORRYING ABOUT WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN IF HE HIT A ROCK IN THE DARK OR SOME SUCH DISASTER AS THAT.

HE WASNT TOO WORRIED ABOUT MISSING A NIGHT'S SLEEP HED HAD OCCASION TO DO THAT BEFORE, WHEN HE WAS CREWING A CLIPPER THROUGH A STORM IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC, OR SPENDING HIS MONEY ASHORE IN SOME ALL-NIGHT PORT.



HE WAS WORRIED ABOUT CRUISING UNDER FULL SAIL ACROSS UNCHARTED DESERT IN THE DARK

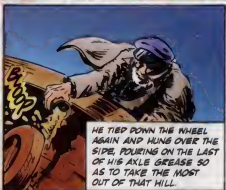
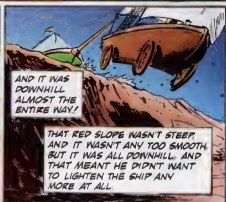
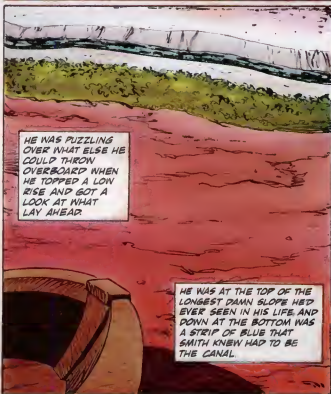
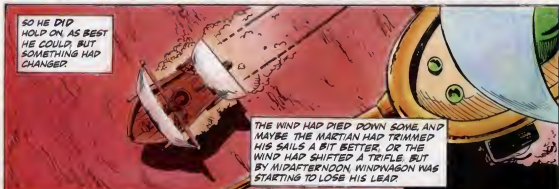
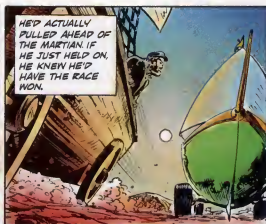
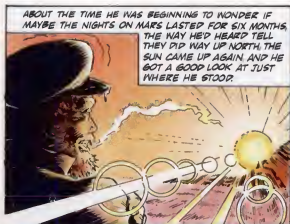


IT HELPED SOME WHEN THE MOONS ROSE, BUT HE STILL SPENT MOST OF THAT NIGHT IN A COLD SWEAT.

ABOUT HIS ONLY CONSOLATION WAS THAT THE CRAZY MARTIAN WAS NEAR AS LIKELY TO WRECK AS HE WAS HIMSELF.

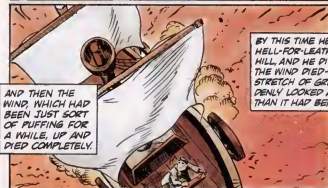


IT WAS A MIGHTY COLD NIGHT, TOO, AND HE WRAPPED HIMSELF IN ALL THREE OF THE COATS HE STILL HAD AND WISHED HE HADNT BEEN SO QUICK TO THROW HIS TRUNK OVER.

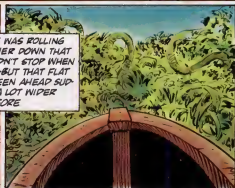




HE COULD SEE THAT HE WAS GAINING QUICKLY NOW, PULLING FARTHER AND FARTHER AHEAD OF THE MARTIAN'S LIGHTER SHIP. HE FIGURED HE JUST ABOUT HAD IT WON.



AND THEN THE WIND, WHICH HAD BEEN JUST SORT OF PUFFING FOR A WHILE, UP AND DIED COMPLETELY.



BY THIS TIME HE WAS ROLLING HELL-FOR-LEATHER DOWN THAT HILL, AND HE DIDN'T STOP WHEN THE WIND DIED--BUT THAT FLAT STRETCH OF GREEN AHEAD SUDDENLY LOOKED A LOT WIDER THAN IT HAD BEFORE.



HE WENT BOUNCING AND RATTLING DOWN THAT HILL, THUMPING AND BUMPING OVER THE LOOSE ROCKS AND THE RED SAND, PRAYING THE WHOLE WAY THAT HE WOULDN'T TIP OVER.

HE DIDN'T DARE LOOK BACK TO SEE WHERE THE MARTIAN WAS.

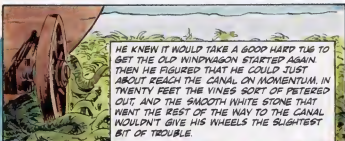


AND THEN HE WAS OFF THE FOOT OF THE SLOPE, CRUNCHING HIS WAY ACROSS THAT GREEN, WHICH WAS ALL SOME SORT OF VINY PLANT, AND HIS WAGON WENT SLOWER, AND SLOWER, AND SLOWER...



...UNTIL FINALLY, WITH ONE BIG BOUNCE AND A BANG, IT CAME TO A DEAD STOP--A HUNDRED FEET OR SO FROM THE CANAL.

SMITH LOOKED DOWN AT THOSE VINES, AND THEN AHEAD AT THAT BLUE WATER, AND THEN BACK AT THE MARTIAN SAND SHIP, WHICH WASN'T MUCH MORE THAN A DARK SPOT ON THE RED HORIZON BEHIND HIM, AND HE JUST ABOUT FELT LIKE CRYING.



HE KNEW IT WOULD TAKE A GOOD HARD TUG TO GET THE OLD WINDWAGON STARTED AGAIN. THEN HE FIGURED THAT HE COULD JUST ABOUT REACH THE CANAL ON MOMENTUM, IN TWENTY FEET THE VINES SORT OF PETERED OUT, AND THE SMOOTH WHITE STONE THAT WENT THE REST OF THE WAY TO THE CANAL WOULDN'T GIVE HIS WHEELS THE SLIGHTEST BIT OF TROUBLE.

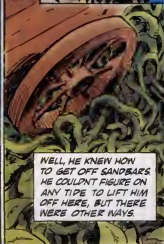


AS THE MARTIAN SAILED CLOSER AND CLOSER DOWN THE SLOPE, SMITH RECALLED THAT THE SAND SHIP HAD A BLADE ON THE FRONT. HE HADN'T SEEN MUCH USE FOR IT BACK ON THE SAND, BUT HE COULD SEE HOW IT WOULD JUST CUT RIGHT THROUGH THOSE VINES.



SMITH HADN'T SEEN THE VINES CUT FROM MARTIAN'S SEE. HE HADN'T SEEN THE VINES EVER BEFORE WHEN HE NEEDED SOME OF THAT OLD YANKEE INGENUITY HE PRIDED HIMSELF ON. SMITH FIGURED THIS WAS IT.

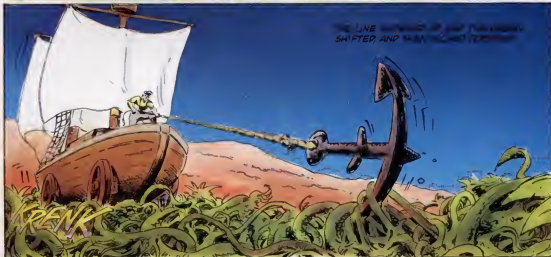
LOOKS A GOOD BIT LIKE SEANEEP--IT'S ALMOST LIKE GETTING STUCK ON A SANDBAR OR IN SHOAL WATER BACK HOME.



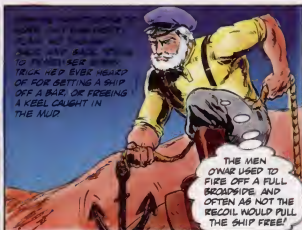
WELL, HE KNEW HOW TO GET OFF SANDBARS. HE COULDN'T FIGURE ON ANY TIDE TO LIFT HIM OFF HERE, BUT THERE WERE OTHER WAYS.



HE COULD KERGE OFF



THE LINE WASN'T A GOOD ONE. IT WASN'T A SHIFTER, AND IT WASN'T A GOOD TIE.





THE COFFEE POT ITSELF WAS BLOWN TO BLACK FLINDERS, BUT THE WAGON ROLLED FORWARD ONTO THE PAVEMENT. THE SAILS CAUGHT THE WIND, FEEBLE AS IT WAS, AND THE WINDWAGON CLATTERED TOWARD THE CANAL...



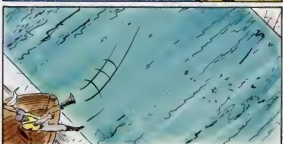
THEN RAN SWACK UP AGAINST A RIDGE, ABOUT TEN FEET FROM THE EDGE, JUST AS THE WIND DIED AGAIN. SMITH JUST ABOUT TORE OUT HIS HAIR AT THAT.



THE MARTIAN SAND SHIP'S LONG, GRACEFUL IRONSPIRIT WOULD STICK OUT OVER THE CANAL IF IT STOPPED WHERE HE WAS. THE RULES SAID PLAINLY THAT HE HAD TO DROP THE PEBBLE--NOT THROW IT.



AND THEN THAT OLD HORSE SENSE CAME THROUGH AGAIN.





BY THE TIME SMITH GOT HIMSELF BACK DOWN ON THE DECK, MR NILLAY HAD GOT HIS OWN SHIP STOPPED ON THE PAVEMENT. SMITH THOUGHT HE LOOKED PRETTY PEEVED, EVEN WITH HIS MASK ON. BUT THERE WASN'T MUCH HE COULD DO.

THE WELCOMING COMMITTEE TOOK SMITH BACK TO THEIR CITY AND MADE A BIG HOWDY-DO OVER HIM, AND TOLD HIM HE WAS THE CHAMPION SAILOR OF ALL MARS. THE FIRST NEW CHAMPION IN NISH ONTO A HUNDRED YEARS.



NO HARD FEELINGS?

NO, MR. SMITH. HOWEVER, I FEEL THERE IS SOMETHING I MUST TELL YOU.

MR. SMITH, I HAVE LIED TO YOU. I CANNOT SEND YOU BACK TO EARTH.

BUT YOU SAID--

I DID NOT BELIEVE I WOULD LOSE. SURELY A SPORTSMAN LIKE YOURSELF CAN UNDERSTAND THAT.

WELL, SMITH HAD TO ALLOW AS HOW HE COULD UNDERSTAND THAT, THOUGH HE COULDN'T RIGHTLY APPROVE. IT SEEMED TO HIM THAT IT WAS MIGHTY CALLOUS TO GO FETCHING SOMEONE OFF HIS HOME PLANET LIKE THAT, WHEN A BODY COULDN'T EVEN SEND HIM BACK LATER.

BUT SMITH HAD ALWAYS BEEN PHILOSOPHICAL ABOUT THESE THINGS. IT WASN'T LIKE HE'D HAD A HOME ANYWHERE ON EARTH: ALL HE'D HAD WAS HIS WINDWAGON, AND HE STILL HAD THAT.

SO WINDWAGON SMITH STAYED ON MARS, AND HE RACED HIS WINDWAGON A FEW MORE TIMES, AND MOSTLY WON.



OLD NILLAY HAD TO ADMIT THAT HE HAD BEEN CALLOUS, ALL RIGHT, AND HE DAMN NEAR GROVELED. HE WAS SO APOLOGETIC ABOUT IT.



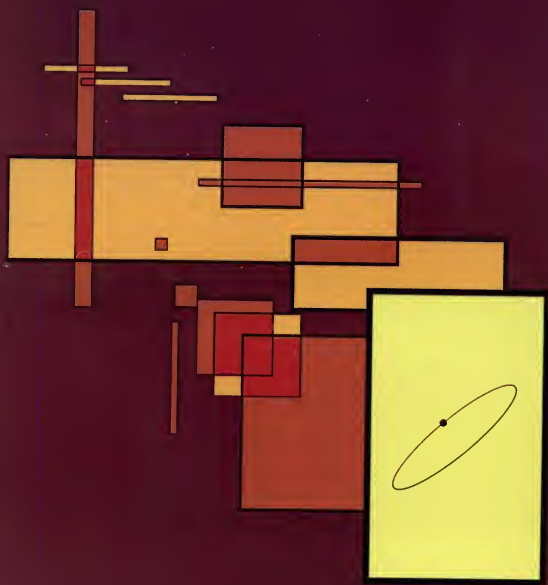
AND THERE ON MARS HE WAS A HERO, AND A RESPECTED MAN, WHERE ON EARTH HE HADN'T BEEN MUCH MORE THAN A CRACKPOT INVENTOR OR A COMMON SEAMAN.



YOU MAY BE THINKING, IF HE STAYED ON MARS, THEN HOW IN TARNATION DID I EVER HEAR THIS STORY, AND ALL THAT I CAN SAY IS WHAT I SAID BEFORE.

THAT'S ANOTHER STORY ENTIRELY.

The End



SILENT NIGHT

G. BOVA

SHE WAS A TINY FIGURE, SKATING ALONE IN THE DARKNESS. DOWS LAKE WAS FIRMLY FROZEN THIS LATE IN DECEMBER. EARLIER IN THE EVENING THE ICE HAD BEEN COVERED WITH SKATERS IN THEIR HOLIDAY FINERY, THE DAVILION CRASHED WITH COUPLES DANCING TO THE HEAVY BEAT OF ROCK MUSIC.

BUT, THIS CLOSE TO MID-NIGHT, KELLY SKATED ALONE.

'SWAN LAKE' WAS PLAYING IN HER STEREO EARPLUGS, THE SAME MUSIC SHE HAD SKATED TO WHEN SHE HAD FAILED TO MAKE THE OLYMPIC TEAM. THE MUSIC'S DARK PASSION, ITS SENSE OF FOREBODING, FITTED KELLY'S MOOD EXACTLY. SHE SKATED ALONE, WITHOUT AUDIENCE, WITHOUT JUDGES.

WITHOUT ANYONE.

I DON'T CARE... IT'S BETTER ALONE. I DON'T NEED ANY OF THEM...

KELLY HATED THE NICKNAME. HER MOTHER HAD CHRISTENED HER STELLA ANGELA, BUT SHE HAD GROWN UP MORE THE NEIGHBORHOOD'S TOMBOY ROUGHNECK THAN AN ANGELIC LITTLE STAR.

AT TEN SHE COULD BEAT UP ANY BOY IN SCHOOL; AT THIRTEEN SHE HAD EARNED A KARATE BLACK BELT, BUT SHE COULD NOT GAIN A PLACE ON THE NATIONAL SKATING TEAM.

AND SHE COULD NOT MAKE FRIENDS.

ILLUSTRATED BY RAFAEL KAYANAN • ADAPTED BY FRED BURKE
PAINTED BY SAL PARSONS • LETTERED BY W. PEARSON
EDITED BY D. KINGSLEY HAHN

REEEEP!

WHOA!

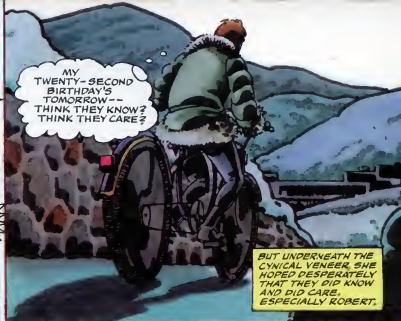
ANGEL STAR, THIS IS ROBBIE. WE'VE GOT A CRISIS. ALL HANDS TO THEIR STATIONS, REPLY AT ONCE.

OKAY, ROBERT I'M ON MY WAY. SEEMS LIKE A DAMNED ODD NIGHT FOR A CRISIS...



WE DON'T
MAKE 'EM,
WE JUST STOP
'EM FROM
BLOWING
UP.

GET
YOUR LITTLE
BUTT DOWN
HERE, SWEETIE,
DOUBLE
QUICK.



MY
TWENTY-SECOND
BIRTHDAY'S
TOMORROW--
THINK THEY KNOW?
THINK THEY CARE?

BUT UNDERNEATH THE
CYNICAL VENEER, SHE
HOPED DESPERATELY
THAT THEY DID KNOW
AND DID CARE,
ESPECIALLY ROBERT.



IF THERE'S
A FRIGGIN'
CRISIS, THE
DUMB GUARDS
SURE DON'T
KNOW IT.



HELLUVA
NIGHT TO MAKE
ME COME IN
TO WORK.

THE SILVER BARS ON HER
SHOULDERS PROCLAIMED
HER TO BE A JUNIOR
LIEUTENANT...



...AND THE SILVER
T IDENTIFIED HER
AS A TELEOPERATOR.

THERE
ARE PLENTY
OF OTHERS WHO
COULD FILL IN
THIS SHIFT.

WHY
DO THEY
ALWAYS
PICK ON
ME?



BUT THEN TWO MORE OPERA-
TORS CLUMPED IN, SILENT
AND GRIM-FACED. THE MEN
NODDED TO KELLY; SHE
NODDED BACK.



AND WHY
CAN'T THEY MAKE
THIS PAIN CAVE
WARM ENOUGH
TO WORK IN?

ROBBIE WAS OUTWARDLY CHEERFUL: A SIX-THREE ADONIS WITH A SMILE THAT COULD MELT TUNGSTEN STEEL, HE WORE THE FOUR-POINTED STAR OF A CAPTAIN ON HIS SHOULDERS.

SORRY TO ROUST YOU TONIGHT OF ALL NIGHTS. WE'VE GOT A BIT OF A MESS SHAPING UP, ANGEL STAR.

WHAT'S GOING ON?

IF ANYONE ELSE CALLED HER BY ANYTHING BUT HER LAST NAME, KELLY BRISTLED, BUT SHE LET HANDSOME ROBERT GET AWAY WITH HIS PET NAME FOR HER.

WHAT ISN'T GOING ON? YOU'D THINK TONIGHT OF ALL NIGHTS EVERYBODY'D BE AT HOME WITH THEIR FAMILIES...

THE ASSEMBLED PILOTS TRIED TO LOOK RELAXED AS HE CALLED THEIR ATTENTION TO THE SCREENS.

GOT A FAMILY OF MOUNTAIN CLIMBERS TRAPPED ON MT. BURGESS UP IN THE YUKON TERRITORY. SATELLITE PICKED UP THEIR EMERGENCY SIGNAL.

AND SOME LOONY TERRORISTS IN CONNECTICUT TRIED TO HIJACK ONE OF THE NUCLEAR SUBMARINES BEING RECOMMISSIONED BY THE U.S. NAVY.

BUT THE CRISIS IN ERITREA--

NOT AGAIN! THEY'VE BEEN FARTING AROUND THERE FOR MORE THAN A YEAR!

JAN, PICK UP THE ERITREA SITUATION, PLEASE.

OVER THE SHOULDER OF JAN VAN DER MEER, ONE OF THE FEW MONITORS SHE KNEW BY NAME, KELLY SAW A GHOSTLY INFRARED IMAGE TAKEN FROM A RECONNAISSANCE SATELLITE IN ORBIT OVER THE MIDDLE EAST.



IT TOOK KELLY A MOMENT TO IDENTIFY THE VAGUE SHAPES AND SHADOWS. TANKS, AND BEHIND THEM, TRUCKS TOWING ARTILLERY PIECES, THREADING THEIR WAY THROUGH THE MOUNTAINS ALONG THE BORDER OF ERITREA.



THEY'RE REALLY GOING TO ATTACK?!

IF WE LET THEM.

BUT THEY MUST KNOW THAT WE'LL THROW EVERYTHING WE HAVE AT THEM!



I GUESS THEY THINK THEY CAN GET AWAY WITH IT.

MAYBE THEY THINK WE WON'T BE ABLE TO REACT FAST ENOUGH, OR THEIR FRIENDS IN THE AFRICAN BLOC WILL PREVENT GENEVA FROM REACTING AT ALL.

WE JUST BARELY DID STOP THE MESS IN SRI LANKA. MAYBE THEY DON'T THINK WE'VE GOT THE MUSCLE TO--



PRIORITY ONE FROM GENEVA!

THIS IS IT, KID. EVERYBODY UP!

KELLY FELT A SURGE OF ELECTRICITY TINGLE THROUGH HER: PART FEAR, PART EXCITEMENT. THE OTHER PILOTS STIRRED TOO.



PILOTS! MAN YOUR PLANES! ALL PILOTS! MAN YOUR PLANES!



I'M ON MY WAY.



SHE THOUGHT SHE HEARD ROBBIE WISHING HER GOOD LUCK.

BUT SHE WASN'T CERTAIN.

DOESN'T MATTER... DOESN'T MATTER...

BUT SHE KNEW THAT WAS A LIE.



THE TECHNICIANS BACKED AWAY AS KELLY SLID INTO THE COCKPIT AND CAST A SWIFT PROFESSIONAL GLANCE AT THE INSTRUMENTS.

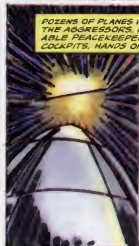


ON THE SCREEN IN FRONT OF HER, SHE SAW THE LITTLE PLANE'S SNUB NOSE GUNTING IN THE PREDAWN STARLIGHT.

SHE LISTENED CAREFULLY TO HER MISSION BRIEFING.



THERE WAS NO PREFLIGHT CHECK-OUT; THE TECHNICIANS DID THAT AND PUNCHED IT INTO THE FLIGHT COMPUTER.

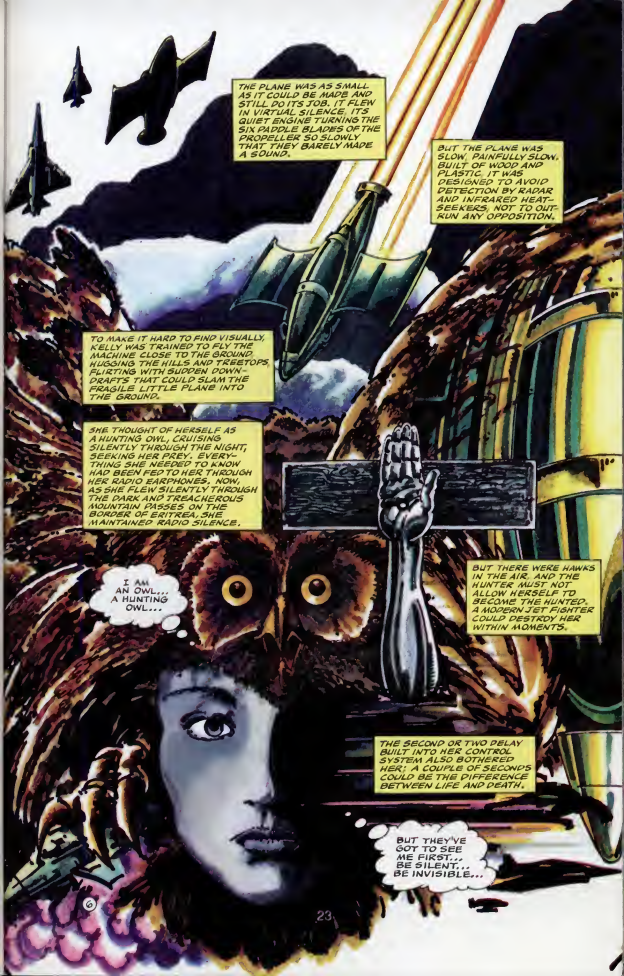


DOZENS OF PLANES WERE BEING SENT AGAINST THE AGGRESSORS. PILOTS FROM EVERY AVAILABLE PEACEKEEPERS STATION WERE IN THEIR COCKPITS, HANDS ON THEIR FLIGHT CONTROLS.



KELLY SUDDENLY FELT FREE AND HAPPY. ALONE AT THE CONTROLS OF AN AGILE LITTLE FLYING MACHINE, HER EVERY MOVEMENT ANSWERED BY A MOVEMENT OF THE PLANE, HER NERVES MELDING WITH THE MACHINE'S CIRCUITRY.





THE PLANE WAS AS SMALL AS IT COULD BE MADE AND STILL DO ITS JOB. IT FLEW IN VIRTUAL SILENCE, ITS QUIET ENGINE TURNING THE SIX PADDLE BLADES OF THE PROPELLER SO SLOWLY THAT THEY BARELY MADE A SOUND.

BUT THE PLANE WAS SLOW, PAINFULLY SLOW, BUILT OF WOOD AND PLASTIC. IT WAS DESIGNED TO AVOID DETECTION BY RADAR AND INFRARED HEAT-SEEKERS, NOT TO OUT-RUN ANY OPPOSITION.

TO MAKE IT HARD TO FIND VISUALLY, KELLY WAS TRAINED TO FLY THE MACHINE CLOSE TO THE GROUND, HUGGING THE HILLS AND TREETOPS, FLIRTING WITH SUDDEN DOWN-DRAFTS THAT COULD SLAM THE FRAGILE LITTLE PLANE INTO THE GROUND.

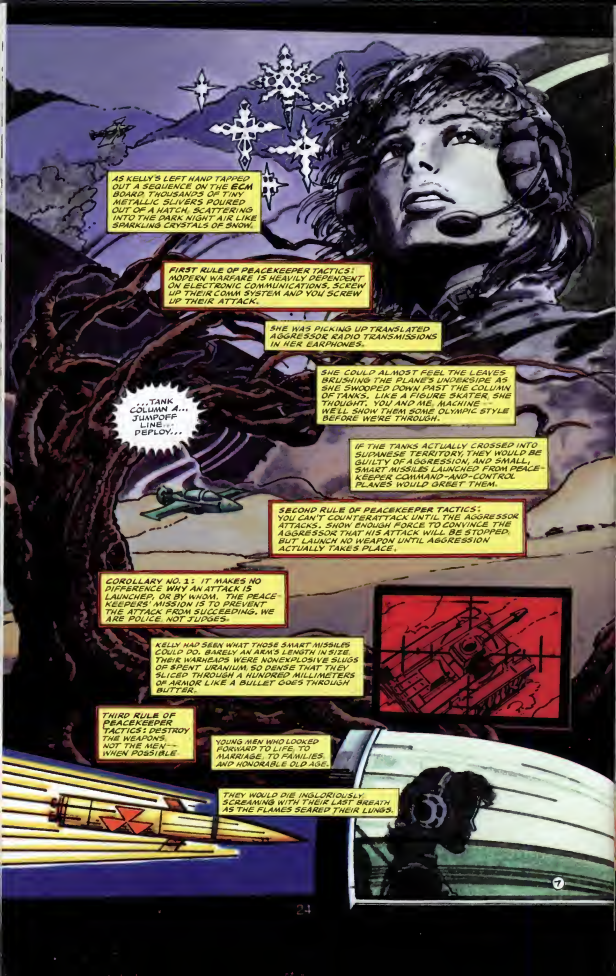
SHE THOUGHT OF HERSELF AS A HUNTING OWL, CRUISING SILENTLY THROUGH THE NIGHT, SEEKING HER PREY. EVERYTHING SHE NEEDED TO KNOW HAD BEEN FED TO HER THROUGH HER RADIO EARPHONES. NOW, AS SHE FLEW SILENTLY THROUGH THE DARK AND TREACHEROUS MOUNTAIN PASSES ON THE BORDER OF ERITREA, SHE MAINTAINED RADIO SILENCE.

I AM
AN OWL...
A HUNTING
OWL...

BUT THERE WERE HAWKS IN THE AIR, AND THE HUNTER MUST NOT ALLOW HERSELF TO BECOME THE HUNTED. A MODERN JET FIGHTER COULD DESTROY HER WITHIN MOMENTS.

THE SECOND OR TWO DELAY BUILT INTO HER CONTROL SYSTEM ALSO BOTHERED HER: A COUPLE OF SECONDS COULD BE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH.

BUT THEY'VE
GOT TO SEE
ME FIRST...
BE SILENT...
BE INVISIBLE...



AS KELLY'S LEFT HAND TAPPED OUT A SEQUENCE ON THE ECM BOARD, THOUSANDS OF TINY METALLIC SLIVERS POURED OUT OF A HATCH, SCATTERING INTO THE DARK NIGHT AIR LIKE SPARKLING CRYSTALS OF SNOW.

FIRST RULE OF PEACEKEEPER TACTICS: MODERN WARFARE IS HEAVILY DEPENDENT ON ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS. SCREW UP THEIR COMM SYSTEM AND YOU SCREW UP THEIR ATTACK.

SHE WAS PICKING UP TRANSLATED AGGRESSOR RADIO TRANSMISSIONS IN HER EARPHONES.

SHE COULD ALMOST FEEL THE LEAVES BRUSHING THE PLANE'S UNDERSIDE AS SHE SWOOPED DOWN PAST THE COLUMN OF TANKS. LIKE A FIGURE SKATER, SHE THOUGHT, YOU AND ME, MACHINE -- WE'LL SHOW THEM SOME OLYMPIC STYLE BEFORE WE'RE THROUGH.

IF THE TANKS ACTUALLY CROSSED INTO JAPANESE TERRITORY, THEY WOULD BE GUILTY OF AGGRESSION, AND SMALL, SMART MISSILES LAUNCHED FROM PEACEKEEPER COMMAND-AND-CONTROL PLANES WOULD GREET THEM.

SECOND RULE OF PEACEKEEPER TACTICS: YOU CAN'T COUNTERATTACK UNTIL THE AGGRESSOR ATTACKS. SHOW ENOUGH FORCE TO CONVINCE THE AGGRESSOR THAT HIS ATTACK WILL BE STOPPED, BUT LAUNCH NO WEAPON UNTIL AGGRESSION ACTUALLY TAKES PLACE.

COROLLARY NO. 1: IT MAKES NO DIFFERENCE WHY AN ATTACK IS LAUNCHED, OR BY WHOM. THE PEACEKEEPERS' MISSION IS TO PREVENT THE ATTACK FROM SUCCEEDING. WE ARE POLICE, NOT JUDGES.

KELLY HAD SEEN WHAT THOSE SMART MISSILES COULD DO. BARELY AN ARM'S LENGTH IN SIZE, THEIR WARHEADS WERE NONEXPLOSIVE SLUGS OF SPENT URANIUM, SO DENSE THAT THEY SLICED THROUGH A HUNDRED MILLIMETERS OF ARMOR LIKE A BULLET GOES THROUGH BUTTER.

THIRD RULE OF PEACEKEEPER TACTICS: DESTROY THE WEAPONS, NOT THE MEN -- WHEN POSSIBLE.

YOUNG MEN WHO LOOKED FORWARD TO LIFE, TO MARRIAGE, TO FAMILIES, AND HONORABLE OLD AGE.

THEY WOULD DIE INSIGLORIOUSLY, SCREAMING WITH THEIR LAST BREATH AS THE FLAMES SEARED THEIR LUNGS.





BUT SHE HAD OTHER
WORK TO DO.

FOURTH RULE OF PEACEKEEPER
TACTICS: A MECHANIZED ARMY
NEEDS FUEL AND AMMUNITION. CUT
OFF THOSE SUPPLIES AND YOU STOP
THE ARMY JUST AS EFFECTIVELY AS
IF YOU HAD KILLED ALL ITS TROOPS.

KELLY'S PLANE WAS A SCOUT, NOT A
MISSILE PLATFORM. IT WAS UNARMED.
IF SHE WAS A HUNTING OWL, SHE
HUNTED FOR INFORMATION, NOT
VICTIMS. SOMEWHERE IN THIS TREACH-
EROUS MAZE THERE WERE SUPPLY
DUMPS, FUEL DEPOTS, AMMUNITION
MAGAZINES. KELLY'S TASK WAS TO
FIND THEM. QUICKLY.


IF IT HAD BEEN AN EASY ASSIGNMENT, SHE
WOULD NOT HAVE GOTTEN IT. BUT THE
ERITREANS HAD DUG THEIR SUPPLY DUMPS
DEEPLY UNDERGROUND, AS PROTECTION
AGAINST BOTH THE PRYING SATELLITE
EYES OF THE PEACEKEEPERS AND THE
INEVITABLE POUNDING OF MISSILES AND
LONG-RANGE ARTILLERY.

KELLY HAD TO FLY THROUGH THOSE TORTUOUS
VALLEYS HUNTING, SEEKING, SCANNING UP
AND DOWN THE SPECTRUM WITH SENSORS
THAT COULD DETECT HEAT, LIGHT, MAGNETIC
FIELDS, EVEN ODORS, AND SHE HAD TO FIND
THE DUMPS BEFORE THE SUN GOT HIGH
ENOUGH TO FILL THOSE VALLEYS WITH LIGHT.
IN DAYLIGHT, HER LITTLE UNARMED CRAFT
WOULD BE SPOTTED INEVITABLY AND ONCE
FOUND, IT WOULD BE SWIFTLY AND MERCIL-
LESSLY DESTROYED.

BUT THE EASTERN
SKY WAS BRIGHTEN-
ING, AND HER TIME
WAS GROWING SHORT.

THE SENSORS WERE PICKING UP DATA NOW, LARGE CLUMPS
OF METAL BURIED HERE, UNMISTAKABLE HEAT RADIA-
TIONS EMANATING FROM THERE, MOLECULES OF HUMAN
SWEAT AND MACHINE OIL AND PLASTIC EXPLOSIVE WAPP-
ING FROM THAT MOUND OF FRESHLY TURNED EARTH.
SHE SQUINTED THE DATA IN HIGHLY COMPRESSED BURSTS
OF LASER LIGHT UP TO A WAITING SATELLITE.

THERE WERE MANY SUCH PLANES FLITTING
ACROSS THE HONEYCOMB OF VALLEYS, EACH
PILOT HOPING THAT THE ERITREANS DID
NOT CATCH ITS TRANSMISSIONS, DID NOT
FIND IT BEFORE IT HAD COMPLETED ITS
TASK AND FLOWN SAFELY HOME.



WHERE'S
THE **BIG STUFF**--
THE MAJOR AMMO AND
FUEL SUPPLIES FOR THE
MAIN FORCE? IT CAN'T
BE FURTHER BACK, DEEPER
INSIDE THE COUNTRY. THEY
MUST HAVE HIDDEN IT
SOMEWHERE CLOSE
TO THE BORDER.

THE SUN'S
COMING UP. I
SHOULD CALL GENEVA
FOR PERMISSION TO HEAD
BACK. COURSE, BY THE
TIME THEY MAKE UP
THEIR MINDS, IT'LL BE
BROAD DAYLIGHT
OUT HERE.

SHE BANKED THE LITTLE
PLANE ON ITS LEFT WING-
TIP AND STARTED TO
RETRACE HER PATH.

THERE'S
GOT TO BE A
MAJOR DUMP
AROUND HERE
SOMEWHERE.
THERE'S **GOT**
TO BE.

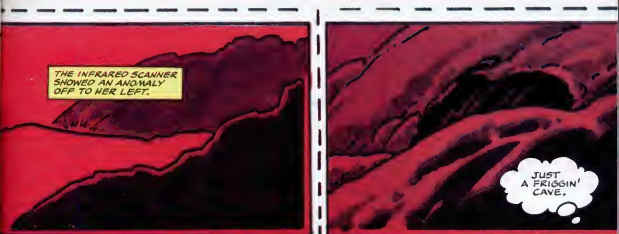
IF THERE WERE NOT, SHE KNEW,
SHE WAS IN TROUBLE. IF THE MAIN
SUPPLY DUMP WAS DEEPER INSIDE
ERITREA AND SHE HAD MISSED IT
BECAUSE SHE HAD FAILED TO CARRY
OUT HER FULL ASSIGNMENT, SHE
WOULD BE RISKING THE LIVES NOT
ONLY OF ERITREANS AND SUDANESE,
BUT PEACEKEEPERS AS WELL. SHE
WOULD BE RISKING HER OWN
CAREER, HER OWN FUTURE, TOO.

THE SUN WAS UP OVER THE
HORIZON NOW, AND SHE WAS
HIGH ENOUGH TO BE EASILY
VISIBLE TO ANYONE.

GRITTING HER TEETH, SHE KEPT
STUBBORNLY ON HER PLAN, CRISS-
CROSSING THE VALLEYS BACK
AND FORTH, WEAVING A PATH TO
THE FRONTIER.

THE ATTACK
HAD STARTED.

FAR AHEAD SHE SAW COLUMNS
OF SMOKE RISING BLACK AND
ONLY INTO THE BRIGHTENING
SKY, MEN WERE DYING THERE.



THE INFRARED SCANNER
SHOWED AN ANOMALY
OFF TO HER LEFT.

JUST
A FRIGGIN'
CAVE.

I'VE
FOUND IT!
MAJOR SUPPLY
PUMP, NOT MORE
THAN TEN KILKS
FROM THE
FRONTIER!

SHE KNEW THAT THE MONITORS
IN GENEVA WOULD HOME IN ON
HER TRANSMISSION, SO WOULD
THE ERITREANS, MOST LIKELY.

BEEEP!

SHE WAS BEING
SCANNED BY A
RADAR BEAM.
SHE KNEW SHE
WAS IN TROUBLE.

IT WAS NOT ROBBIE'S VOICE
THAT REPLIED AN AGONIZING
TEN SECONDS LATER.

IT MIGHT
BE A SUPPLY
PUMP, BUT HOW
CAN YOU BE
SURE?

THE
TRUCK CONVOY,
PAMMIT! THEY'RE
STARTING UP
THE ROAD!

EVEN
IF YOU ARE
RIGHT, WE HAVE
NO MEANS TO GET
AT THE PUMP. IT
IS TOO WELL
PROTECTED.

RETURN TO YOUR
BASE OF OPERATIONS.
YOUR MISSION IS
TERMINATED.

BY REFLEX, SHE CRANED
HER HEAD TO LOOK ABOVE,
THEN CHECKED THE DIS-
PLAY SCREENS. A COUPLE
OF CONTRAILS WAY UP
THERE. IF SHE TRIED
TO CLIMB OUT OF THIS
VALLEY, THOSE TWO JET
FIGHTERS WOULD BE ON
HER LIKE SWOOPING HAWKS.

A woman with dark hair and a headset is in the cockpit of a vehicle. She is looking forward, her hands on the controls. The cockpit has red-lit panels and various instruments. Large blue sound effects are overlaid on the lower part of the image.

MIGHT
AS WELL FIND
OUT FOR SURE
IF I'M RIGHT.

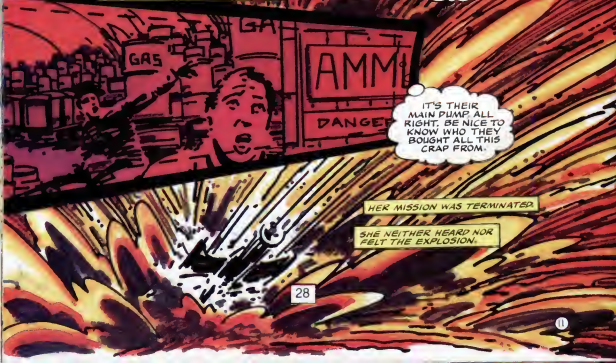
SHE ANGLED THE LITTLE
PLANE DIRECTLY TOWARD
THE MOUTH OF THE CAVE.

KRAK SPAK
SPANG!

HER ACOUSTIC SENSORS PICKED
UP THE SOUNDS OF SMALL-ARMS
FIRE. THE TROOPS DOWN THERE
WERE USING HER FOR TARGET
PRACTICE.

THEY'RE
LOUSY
SHOTS...

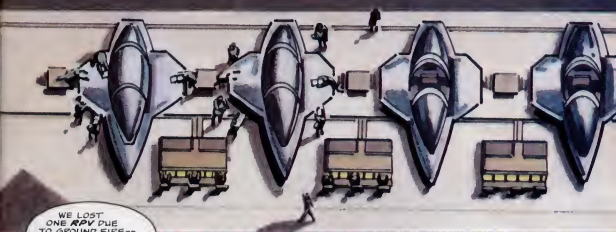
...THANK
GOD.

A large explosion is shown at the bottom of the page. In the background, there are gas tanks labeled 'GAS' and 'AMM' with a 'DANGER' sign. A man's face is visible in the foreground, looking shocked. The scene is filled with fire and smoke.

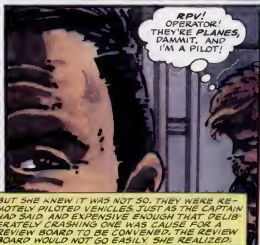
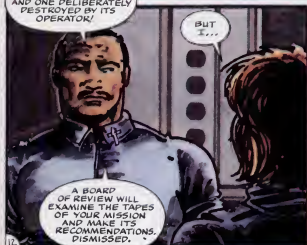
IT'S THEIR
MAIN PUMP. ALL
RIGHT, BE NICE TO
KNOW WHO THEY
BOUGHT ALL THIS
CRAP FROM.

HER MISSION WAS TERMINATED.

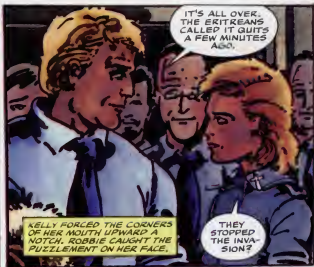
SHE NEITHER HEARD NOR
FELT THE EXPLOSION.



WE LOST
ONE RPV DUE
TO GROUND FIRE---
AND ONE DELIBERATELY
DESTROYED BY ITS
OPERATOR!



BUT SHE KNEW IT WAS NOT SO. THEY WERE REMOTELY PILOTED VEHICLES. JUST AS THE CAPTAIN HAD SAID. AND EXPENSIVE ENOUGH THAT DELIBERATELY CRASHING ONE WAS CAUSE FOR A REVIEW BOARD TO BE CONVENED. THE REVIEW BOARD WOULD NOT GO EASILY. SHE REALIZED.



WE STOPPED
A WAR. IT COST
SOME LIVES, BUT
WE PROTECTED
THE PEACE.

COURSE,
IT MIGHT ALSO
COST ME MY
JOB.

INTERNATIONAL
PEACE KEEPING FORCE
NATION SHALL NOT LIFT
SWORD AGAINST NATION

DON'T
LOOK SO DOWN,
GIRL. THE REVIEW
BOARD AIN'T
GONNA GO HARD
ON YOU.

I
HOPE.

THE SKY WAS STILL DARK
AND SPRINKLED WITH STARS,
THE AIR BITINGLY COLD.

SHOULD I
TELL THEM?
THEY WOULDN'T
CARE, OR MAYBE
THEY'D THINK I
WAS TRYING TO
CALL ATTENTION
TO MYSELF...

YOU KNOW, THIS
IS MY BIRTHDAY.
TODAY, CHRISTMAS
DAY.

REALLY?

HAPPY
BIRTHDAY,
LITTLE
SISTER.

NOT JUST
YET, ANGEL STAR.
GOT ANOTHER
FEW TICKS
TO GO.

YOUR WATCH
MUST BE SLOW.
THE MIDNIGHT
CHORALE'S ALREADY
STARTED.

THEIR
CLOCK MUST
BE FAST.

THE WHOLE GROUP OF THEM STOPPED IN THE CLEAR
NIGHT AIR AND LISTENED TO THE CHILDREN'S VOICES,
COMING AS IF FROM ANOTHER WORLD.

KELLY STOOD BETWEEN TALL
ROBERT AND BEAUTIFUL, WARM
BAILEY AND FELT AS IF THEY WERE
SINGING ESPECIALLY TO HER.

SILENT NIGHT...
HOLY NIGHT...
ALL IS CALM...
ALL IS BRIGHT...

FIN



ISAAC ASIMOV'S

MAROONED OFF VESTA

BUSINESS AS USUAL...

MY LUCK TO
DRAW THIS LOUSY
SUPPLY MISSION!

...UNTIL...

REPULSION
SCREEN
FAILURE

GA-THRUNCH!

ADAPTED BY
J. D. SCOTT
ILLUSTRATED BY
MICHAEL DAVIS
LETTERED BY
BILL PEARSON
EDITED BY
D. KINGSLEY HANN

HOURS LATER...

STOP
WALKING UP
AND DOWN--
YOU'RE USING
UP AIR.

CONSIDER
YOURSELF LUCKY
TO BE ALIVE.

WE'VE GOT THREE
ROOMS-- AIR FOR
THREE DAYS. YOU
CALL THAT
LUCK?!

COMPARED TO
EVERYONE ELSE
ON THE SHIP--
YES!

THERE'S NOT ENOUGH
JABRA TO STAY DRUNK
FOR THREE DAYS. SAVE
IT FOR WHEN THE AIR
GETS STUFFY-- THEN WE
WON'T KNOW WHEN
THE END COMES--
OR CARE.

GRADE
"A" JABRA
WATER. I AIN'T
TOO PROUD TO
SHARE.

THERE'S PEOPLE
ON VESTA. WE'D
BE SAFE IF WE
WERE DOWN
THERE.

HOW
FAR AWAY
ARE WE?

THREE--
FOUR HUNDRED
MILES. IT'S A
SMALL ASTEROID.
ONLY TWO HUNDRED
MILES IN DI-
AMETER.

IF WE
COULD
ONLY GIVE
OURSELVES
A PUSH.
WE COULD
START
FALLING.

THERE
WOULDN'T BE
ANY DANGER OF
CRASHING. VESTA
DOESN'T HAVE THE
GRAVITY TO CRUSH
A CREAM PUFF.



FUNNY
PLACE...
I'VE
BEEN
DOWN
THERE

... I
WAS ON
VESTA
TWO...
THREE
TIMES.
IT'S ALL
COVERED
WITH
SOME
STUFF
LIKE
SNOW--
ONLY IT
AIN'T
SNOW.

FROZEN
CARBON
DIOXIDE
?

NO, THEY
WON'T BE
LOOKING
FOR US...

YEAH--
DRY ICE.
THAT'S
WHAT
MAKES
IT
SHINE.
GIVES
IT HIGH
ALBEDO.

WON'T
THEY BE
LOOKING
FOR US
AS SOON
AS THEY
HEAR
ABOUT
THIS
CRASH
?


... NO ONE'S
GOING TO FIND
OUT ABOUT THE
CRASH UNTIL
THE *SILVER
QUEEN* FAILS
TO TURN UP
ON SCHEDULE.
WE DIDN'T
EVEN HAVE
TIME TO SEND
OUT AN SOS.

WE'VE
GOT TO
GET TO
VESTA
BEFORE
THE AIR
GIVES
OUT.

IF WE
ONLY
KNEW
HOW TO
GO ABOUT
IT, HUH
?

WILL YOU
TWO STOP
THIS DAMN
CHATTER
AND DO
SOMETHING
?!!

FOR
GOD'S
SAKE,
DO SOME-
THING
!



THREE DAYS OF AIR!
THAT'S THE JOKER IN
THE DECK. NO COMMUNI-
CATION. NO PROPULSIVE
MECHANISM. ONE
FUEL JET WOULD
DO IT--
SEND US IN
THE RIGHT
DIRECTION TO
VESTA.



FIRST, FATE
PUTS US WITHIN ARM'S
REACH OF A PLACE OF SAFETY--
THEN SEES TO IT THAT WE
HAVE NO WAY OF GETTING
THERE. A YEAR'S SUPPLY
OF WATER, ENOUGH TO
GARGLE AND TO WASH
AND TO TAKE BATHS IN
AND ANYTHING ELSE
WE WANT.

WATER--
DAMN
THE
WATER!

TAKE IT
EASY, MARK. WE'RE
NOT SO BADLY OFF. WE
CAN EAT DOUBLE RATIONS
AND DRINK OURSELVES
SOBBERY.

HELL,
WE HAVE
WATER ENOUGH
TO THROW
AWAY...

HEY!
THAT'S
IT!

WHY DO YOU
MAKE A JOKE OUT
OF THIS? CAN'T YOU
SEE-- WHAT'S THE
MATTER?!

WHY
DIDN'T I
THINK OF IT
BEFORE?

THWOP!



WHAT
WAS THE
REASON
FOR
THAT?

RAISE OUR
HOPES WITH SOME
SILLY SCHEME AND THEN
FIND IT DOESN'T WORK.
I'LL FIND A USE FOR
THE WATER; DROWN
YOU--AND SAVE SOME
OF THE AIR
BESIDES!

LISTEN, MIKE,
YOU'RE OUT OF THIS.
I'M GOING TO DO IT ALONE.
I DON'T NEED YOUR HELP
AND I DON'T WANT IT.
IF YOU'RE THAT SURE
OF DYING AND
THAT AFRAID WHY
NOT GET THE AGONY
OVERT? WE'VE GOT ONE
HEAT RAY AND ONE
PETNATOR...

...TAKE YOUR
CHOICE AND KILL
YOURSELF, SHEA
AND I WON'T
INTERFERE.

ALL
RIGHT,
WARREN,
I'M WITH
YOU.
I - I GUESS
I DIDN'T QUITE
KNOW WHAT I
WAS DOING...

ALL RIGHT,
BOY, TAKE IT EASY.
I KNOW HOW YOU FEEL.
IT'S GOT ME, TOO.

BUT DON'T
GIVE IN TO IT.
FIGHT IT, OR YOU'LL
GO STARK RAVING
MAD.

COME
ON, LET'S
GET BUSY.
WE'RE
GOING
PLACES.



IS IT
AIRTIGHT?

I DON'T KNOW.
THE INNER DOOR SEEMS
OKAY-- BUT IF I OPEN THE
OUTER ONE AND THERE'S
ANYTHING WRONG--
BOOBY!!!

I'VE GOT TO
GET OUTSIDE
SOME WAY. WE'VE
GOT TO TAKE
THE CHANCE.



YOU
SURE
YOU'VE
BEEN IN
ONE OF
THOSE
SUITS
BEFORE?



SURE.

WELL,
ONCE IN
SABIG,
ANYWAY.

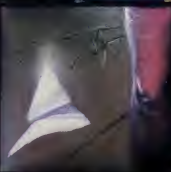


THE LOCK
WAS LAST
USED FOR
ENTRANCE--
IT SHOULD
BE FULL
OF AIR.



OPEN THE
DOOR THE TINIEST
BIT.

IF THERE'S
A LEAK, THE
ESCAPING GAS WILL
HOLD THIS AGAINST
THE CRACK.



LET'S
HOPE THIS
THING WILL
STILL OPEN.



BUUUK

CRRAAAKK

THUNG



GREAT, ALL
I HAVE TO DO IS
GET TO THE
OTHER SIDE OF
THIS MESS.





MAYBE
THIS WON'T BE
SO BAD.



AT LEAST
THESE MAGNETIC
GRAPPLES ARE
WORKING...



...WORKING
ERRATICALLY.



TO MAKE
MATTERS
WORSE:



THE NIGHTMARE
BEGINS.


MY GOD,
THERE'S HARDLY
ANY FERROUS
MATERIAL IN
THE INTERIOR
STRUCTURE!




CA-THUNCH!

S-S-S-S
TUNK!

PROGRESS IS MEASURED
IN INCHES.



THE REGIONAL GRAVI-
TATORS HAVE A NASTY
SENSE OF HUMOR.



THE CRAWL IS ETERNITY—
SOMETHING THAT HAS
ALWAYS EXISTED AND WILL
EXIST FOREVER.

HIS MIND BEGINS
TO WAVER.



AND SALVA-
TION IS ONLY
A STONE'S
THROW AWAY.



JUST A LITTLE
PUSH OFF. A HARD
KICK AGAINST THE
SIDE OF THE SHIP—
I COULD START
FALLING TOWARD
VESTA...



I COULD
START FALLING.
BUT WHAT IF
I WENT INTO
ORBIT?






WHY
DO THEY
HAVE TO
MAKE THESE
TANKS THREE
INCHES
THICK?

Guzzzzzzz



YOU'D
THINK THEY
COULD MAKE
A SUIT THAT
KEEPS HEAT
OUT AS
WELL AS
IN!

Guzzzz



Guzzzzzzzz

THERE
CAN'T BE
MUCH LEFT IN
THE POWER
PACK.



Zzzzzz - PHUU

CRACK!

SIZZZZZ

THE BOMB-
BRUISING
JOURNEY
BACK TO
AIRLOCK 3
IS DRIVEN
ONLY BY THE
INSTINCT FOR
SURVIVAL.

WE'RE APPROACHING
VESTA IN A SPIRAL PATH--
THE STEAM JET SHOULD
LAND US IN FIVE OR
SIX HOURS.

STEAM--AT
THE LOW **PRESSURE**
OF SPACE; THE BOILING
POINT OF WATER FALLS
WITH THE PRESSURE. IT
IS VERY LOW INDEED
IN A VACUUM.

EVEN
ICE HAS
A VAPOR
PRESSURE
SUFFICIENT
TO SUB-
LIME.

AS A
MATTER OF
FACT, IT FREEZES
AND BOILS AT THE
SAME TIME. WELL, HOW
DO YOU FEEL NOW,
BRANDON? BETTER,
EH?

STEAM--
AT THE LOW
TEMPERATURE
OF SPACE?

I MUST HAVE
ACTED LIKE A DAMN
FOOL AND A COWARD AT
FIRST. I--I GUESS I DON'T
DESERVE ALL THIS AFTER
GOING TO PIECES.

FORGET
IT. YOU'LL
NEVER KNOW HOW
NEAR I CAME TO
BREAKING DOWN
MYSELF.

GENTLEMEN,
I GIVE YOU THE
YEAR'S SUPPLY
OF GOOD OLD H₂O
WE USED TO
HAVE.

THE END

GRAPHIC ALBUMS FROM ECLIPSE

1. **SABRE** by DON MCGREGOR and PAUL GULACY
(1978) 48 pp, 8 1/2 x 11, b&w
□ 1st edition saddle stitched paperback: 20.00
□ 10th Ann. edition trade paperback: 6.95
□ 10th Ann. ed. signed limited cloth: 25.95
2. **NIGHT MUSIC** by P. CLAU RUSSELL
(1979) 48 pp, 8 1/2 x 11, b&w
□ saddle stitched paperback: 10.00
3. **DETECTIVES, INC.** by DON MCGREGOR and MARSHALL ROGERS
(1980) 48 pp, 8 1/2 x 11, b&w
□ trade paperback: 10.00
4. **STEWART THE RAT** by STEVE GELBER, GENE COLAN, and TOM PALMER
(1980) 48 pp, 8 1/2 x 11, b&w
□ trade paperback: 8.00
5. **THE PRICE** by JIM STARLIN
(1981) 48 pp, 8 1/2 x 11, b&w
□ saddle stitched paperback: 25.00
6. **I AM COYOTE** by STEVE ENGLEHART and MARSHALL ROGERS
(1984) 64 pp, 8 1/2 x 11, full colour
□ trade paperback: 25.00
7. **THE POCKETTEER** by DAVE STEVENS
(1985) 72 pp, 8 1/2 x 11 full colour
(1st printing trade paperback and hardbound out of print)
□ 2nd printing trade paperback: 8.95
□ 2nd printing clothbound: 20.95
8. **ZORRO IN OLD CALIFORNIA** by NEDAUO and MARCELLO
(1986) 64 pp, 8 1/2 x 11, full colour
□ trade paperback: 7.95
□ hardbound: 12.95
9. **THE SACRED AND THE PROFANE** by KEN STACY and DEAN MOTTER
(1987) 128 pp, 8 1/2 x 11, full colour
□ trade paperback: 15.95
□ clothbound: 25.95
□ clothbound signed limited edition: 36.00
10. **SOMERSET HOLMES** by BRUCE JONES, APRIL CAMPBELL, and BRENT ANDERSON
(1987) 128 pp, 8 1/2 x 11, full colour
□ trade paperback: 15.95
□ clothbound: 25.95
□ clothbound signed limited edition: 36.00
11. **FLOYD FARLAND, CITIZEN OF THE FUTURE** by CHRIS WARE
(1987) 48 pp, 7 x 10, b&w
□ trade paperback: 3.95
12. **SILVERHEELS** by BRUCE JONES, SCOTT HAMPTON, and APRIL CAMPBELL
(1987) 64 pp, 8 1/2 x 11, full colour
□ trade paperback: 8.95
□ hardbound: 15.95
□ hardbound signed limited edition: 25.95
13. **THE SISTERHOOD OF STEEL** by CHERRY MARX and PETER LEDGER
(1987) 72 pp, 8 1/2 x 11, full colour
□ trade paperback: 9.95
□ clothbound: 15.95
□ clothbound signed limited edition: 25.95
14. **SAMURAI, SON OF DEATH** by SHUNAMU D'YONDO & HIROSHI HIRATA
(1987) 48 pp, 7 x 10, b&w
□ trade paperback: 4.95
15. **TWISTED TALES** edited by BRUCE JONES and APRIL CAMPBELL
(1987) 48 pp, 7 x 10, full colour
□ trade paperback: \$4.95
16. **AIR FIGHTERS CLASSICS VOL. 1: THE ORIGIN OF**

- ALBOY** edited by CATHERINE YENHOODE
(1987) 64 pp, 7x 10, b&w
□ trade paperback: 4.95
17. **YALKYRIE, PRISONER OF THE PAST** by CHARLES DUDON, PAUL GULACY, and WILL ELYSBERG
(1988) 78 pp, 7 x 10, full colour
□ trade paperback: 7.95
□ clothbound signed limited edition: 30.95
18. **AIR FIGHTERS CLASSICS VOL. 2: THE ORIGIN OF SCYTHS** edited by CATHERINE YENHOODE
(1988) 64 pp, 7x 10, b&w
□ trade paperback: 4.95
19. **SCOUTS: THE FOUR MONSTERS** by TIMOTHY TRIJAN and THOMAS WATERS
(1988) 136 pp, 7 x 10, full colour
□ trade paperback: 15.95
□ clothbound signed limited edition: 36.00
20. **AIR FIGHTERS CLASSICS VOL. 3: SECRETS OF THE RED PLANE** edited by CATHERINE YENHOODE
(1987) 64 pp, 7 x 10, b&w
□ trade paperback: 4.95
21. **XYR** by STUART MORF, BEN DUNE, FRANK GULCOA, and JIM MOONEY
(1988) 48 pp, 7 x 10, b&w
□ trade paperback: 4.95
22. **ALIEN WORLDS** edited by BRUCE JONES and APRIL CAMPBELL
(1988) 48 pp, 7 x 10, full colour
□ trade paperback: 4.95
23. **AIR FIGHTERS CLASSICS VOL. 4: BOMBS OVER BOSTON** edited by CATHERINE YENHOODE
(1988) 64 pp, 7 x 10, b&w
□ trade paperback: 4.95
24. **HEARTBREAK COMICS** by DAVE BOWELL
(1988) 48 pp, 8 1/2 x 11, b&w
□ trade paperback: 5.95
25. **ALEX TOT'S ZORRO VOL. 1** by ALEX TOT
(1988) 120 pp, 8 1/2 x 11, b&w
□ trade paperback: 10.95
(for clothbound, see Vol. 2, below)
26. **ALEX TOT'S ZORRO VOL. 2** by ALEX TOT
(1988) 120 pp, 8 1/2 x 11, b&w
□ trade paperback: 10.95
□ clothbound vols. 1 and 2 signed limited edition, together in one slipcase: 55.00
27. **SHE** by H. ROSE HARRIS, ADAPTED BY DIK DAVE and VINCENT NAPOLI
(1988) 64 pp, 7 x 10, b&w
□ trade paperback: 5.95
28. **BROUGHT TO LIGHT** by ALAN MOORE, BILL SEDGWICKE, JOYCE BRADNER, THOMAS WATERS, and PAUL MAYRIDER
(1988) 80 pp, 8 1/2 x 11, full colour
□ trade paperback: 9.95
□ clothbound: 30.95
29. **MIRACLEMAN: BOOK ONE** by ALAN MOORE, GARRY LEACH, and ALAN DAVIS
(1988) 80 pp, 7 x 10, full colour
□ trade paperback: 10.95
□ clothbound: 30.95
30. **REAL LOVE: THE BERT OF THE SIMON AND KERRY ROMANCE COMICS** edited by RICHARD HOWELL
(1988) 160 pp, 8 1/2 x 11, b&w
□ trade paperback: 13.95
31. **PIGEONS FROM HELL** by ROBERT E. HOWARD, ADAPTED BY SCOTT HAMPTON
(1988) 64 pp, 8 1/2 x 11, full colour
□ trade paperback: 8.95
□ clothbound signed limited edition: 30.95
32. **TEENAGED DOPE SLAYS AND REFORM SCHOOL GIRLS** edited by DEAN MALONEY

- (1988) 112 pp, 8 1/2 x 11, b&w
□ trade paperback: 10.95
33. **BOGIE** by CLAUDE JEAN-PHILIPPE and PATRICK LEROUX
(1988) 64 pp, 8 1/2 x 11, full colour
□ trade paperback: 10.95
34. **AIR FIGHTERS CLASSICS VOL. 5: BASTARD REBEL** TO BETA edited by CATHERINE YENHOODE
(1988) 64 pp, 7 x 10, b&w
□ trade paperback: 4.95
35. **INTO THE SHADOW OF THE SUN: RAIL** by COLIN WILSON
(1988) 48 pp, 8 1/2 x 11, full colour
□ trade paperback: 8.95
36. **ARIANE AND BLUEBEARD** by MAURICE MATTEBLINCK, ADAPTED BY P. CLAU RUSSELL
(1988) 48 pp, 7 x 10, full colour
□ trade paperback: 4.95
□ clothbound signed limited edition: 30.95
37. **AIR FIGHTERS CLASSICS VOL. 6: THE NAU YOUTH KULTUR** edited by CATHERINE YENHOODE
(1989) 64 pp, 7 x 10, b&w
□ trade paperback: 4.95
38. **DR. WATCHSTOP: ADVENTURES IN TIME AND SPACE** by KEN MACHIN
(1989) 64 pp, 8 1/2 x 11, full colour
□ trade paperback: 8.95
□ clothbound signed limited edition: 30.95
39. **JAMES BOND 007: PERMISSION TO DIE VOL. 1** by MIKE GIBEL
(1989) 48 pp, 7 x 10, full colour
□ trade paperback: 4.95
40. **JAMES BOND 007: PERMISSION TO DIE VOL. 2** by MIKE GIBEL
(1989) 48 pp, 7 x 10, full colour
□ trade paperback: 4.95
41. **JAMES BOND 007: PERMISSION TO DIE VOL. 3** by MIKE GIBEL
(1989) 48 pp, 7 x 10, full colour
□ trade paperback: 4.95
42. **JAMES BOND 007: LICENSE TO KILL** by MIKE GIBEL, CHUCK ALSTED, THOMAS WATERS, & STAN WOOD
(1989) 48 pp, 8 1/2 x 11, full colour
□ trade paperback: 8.95
□ clothbound: 30.95
43. **TAPPING THE VEIN VOL. 1** by CLIVE BARKER, ADAPTED BY CLAU RUSSELL, CHUCK WAGNER, FRED BURKE, and SCOTT HAMPTON
(1989) 48 pp, 7 x 10, full colour
(1st printing (gold foil) sold out)
□ trade paperback 2nd printing (green foil): 7.95
44. **THE HOBBIT: BOOK 1** by J. R. R. TOLKIEN, ADAPTED BY CHARLES DUDON and DAVID WENZEL
(1989) 48 pp, 8 1/2 x 11, full colour
□ trade paperback: 5.95
45. **TOWARDS D'AMPLESTONE** by TIM CONRAD
(1989) 122 pp, 8 1/2 x 11, b&w
□ trade paperback: 10.95
□ clothbound signed limited edition: 36.00
46. **TAPPING THE VEIN VOL. 2** by CLIVE BARKER, ADAPTED BY CHUCK WAGNER, FRED BURKE, KLAUS JANHOV, and JOHN BOLTON
(1989) 48 pp, 7 x 10, full colour
□ trade paperback: 7.95
47. **LARRY MARDER'S BEANWORLD** by LARRY MARDER
(1989) 122 pp, 7 x 10, b&w
□ trade paperback: 10.95
□ clothbound signed limited edition: 31.00

SEND TWO FIRST CLASS STAMPS FOR A COMPLETE CATALOGUE OF ECLIPSE GRAPHIC ALBUMS, COMICS, AND TRADING CARDS.

All graphic albums are shipped postpaid. Most are cover price plus postage and handling, but prices on some older albums have been adjusted to reflect scarcity, dwindling stocks, and rising collector values.

Check off items required above and send payment in U.S. funds to:
ECLIPSE BOOKS, P.O. BOX 1099, FORESTVILLE, CALIFORNIA 95436

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____
CITY _____
STATE _____ ZIP _____

WHAT'S LEFT
AFTER YOU'VE
GONE INTO

ORBIT?



MAKE THE LEAP . . . from the pages of *Orbit*, the world's foremost graphic SF anthology, to the pages of **ISAAC ASIMOV'S SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE**! *Locus Magazine* hailed *Isasfm* as "the magazine on the cutting edge with the newest ideas and writers." Our award-winning fiction includes stories by Roger Zelazny, Robert Silverberg, John Verlay, Connie Willis, Harlan Ellison, Lucius Shepard, William Gibson—and, of course, Isaac Asimov! Each new issue will excite and surprise you, as you join our monthly voyage to worlds beyond imagination. And if you subscribe now, you'll receive a bonus gift book: *Science Fiction by Asimov*, featuring some of the Grandmaster's best stories, including one written especially for subscribers of the magazine!

What's left after you leave *Orbit*? The adventure of your life . . .

Please start my 12 issue subscription to Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine. I have enclosed \$19.95, a 28% savings off the basic price. In addition to my 12-issue subscription, I will receive *Science Fiction by Isaac Asimov* as an extra gift.

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Outside US & Possessions, 12 for \$22.95.

MFSN-0

Send Your Subscription Order To:

Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine

Post Office Box 7058

Red Oak, IA 51591-2058

PLEASE ALLOW 8-8 WEEKS FOR DELIVERY OF YOUR FIRST ISSUE

WHAT'S NEXT: ORBIT #3

ISAAC ASIMOV

THE LAST QUESTION

ART ♦ JOHN ESTES

LUCIUS SHEPARD

THE END OF LIFE AS WE KNOW IT

ART ♦ TOM YEATES

GARRY KILWORTH

THE LOST GARDEN OF ENID BLYTON, BEATRIX
POTTER, LUCY ATWELL AND THE REST OF THE
LADS OF THE 32nd PARACHUTE REGIMENT

ART ♦ JOHN BOLTON

MAROONED OFF VESTA

BY ISAAC ASIMOV

His first short story!

Adrift among the asteroids, the astronauts of the "Silver Queen" face slow death after the destruction of their vessel. Only raw courage and ingenuity can save a crew "Marooned Off Vesta."

**ILLUSTRATED BY
MICHAEL DAVIS**



SILENT NIGHT

BY BEN BOVA

Will battles of Earth be fought by soldiers of might—or by Peacekeepers? This award-winning SF author explores the future of warfare on a "Silent Night."

**ILLUSTRATED BY
RAFAEL KAYANAN**



WINDWAGON SMITH AND THE MARTIANS

BY LAWRENCE WATT-EVANS

Some called him a crazy cowpoke, others the great Land Sallor of Two Worlds. You'll discover the truth when you journey through time and space with "Windwagon Smith and the Martians."

**ILLUSTRATED BY
DARICK ROBERTSON
AND MARK PACELLA**



\$4.95/\$5.95 Canada
ISBN 1-56060-039-X

ECLIPSE  BOOKS®